

BOX 3.1

Core Strategies of Family-Centered Practice



Preventive Care: Family health care emphasizes prevention through vaccinations, screenings, lifestyle and behavior counseling, and other proactive measures. The practitioner helps patients reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases and other health issues by focusing on prevention.



Contextualized Care: Family health care considers the physical, emotional, social, environmental, and economic factors that might affect an individual pet's health. Family health care seeks to provide more personalized, effective care by addressing these interconnected elements.



Coordination of Care: In a family health care setting, practitioners often focus on coordinating care between family members and medical specialties. Zoonotic diseases provide a particular example where coordination is critical.



Education and Support: Family health care practitioners can play a crucial role in directing family members to health and wellness resources. This includes resources guiding nutrition, exercise, mental health, and other aspects of healthy living and resources to support managing chronic conditions.



Community Engagement: Some family health care models also involve community engagement, working to understand and address broader social determinants of health within the community where the family lives.



Emphasis on Relationships: A strong therapeutic relationship between the provider and the family centers this approach, emphasizing communication, trust, collaboration, and nonjudgment.

The 2024 Community Care Guidelines for Small Animal Practice are available at aaha.org/community-care.

These guidelines were prepared by a Task Force of experts convened by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and were subjected to a formal peer-review process. This document is intended as a guideline only, not an AAHA standard of care. These guidelines and recommendations should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to each individual practice setting. ©2024 AAHA.

